(c) whether the bureaucracy is set to dilute the content and efficacy of the RTI Act purposely enacted to lend transparency in public governance;

(d) whether it is a fact that Government have also decided to exempt UPSC and other agencies which are involved in conducting public examinations from the RTI Act; and

(e) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS(SHRI SURESH PACHOURI): (a) After consideration of the various aspects of the issue, the Government is of the view that substantive file notings on certain aspects relating to social and developmental issues may be disclosed. Modalities in this regard however, are being worked out in consultation with Minisitry of Law and Justice.

(b) The Right to Information Bill 2004, as introduced by the Government in the Lok Sabha on 23rd December, 2004, was not sent to the Central Vigilance Commission for vetting.

(c) and (d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

Deterioration of BSNL telephone services in rural areas

*237. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been a sharp deterioration of telephone services of BSNL in rural areas;

(b) if so, to what extent the poor and sub-standard services has affected BSNL;

(c) whether Government have any mechanism to assess the quality of service of BSNL in rural areas;

(d) what steps are proposed to improve the services of BSNL in rural areas; and

(e) the reasons for lack of motivation in BSNL management?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has prescribed standard of Quality of Service (QoS) for telecom service providers. Accodingly, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) carries out daily analysis of faults and complaints, monitoring of interruption of exchanges & media for assessing quality of service of rural areas. In addition Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) periodically carries out assessment of quality of service for all services providers.

(d) Following steps are being taken progressively to improve the services of BSNL in rural areas:-

(i) introduction of Wireless in Local Loop System to cover larger rural areas.

(ii) Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) based centralized fault booking at Short Distance Charging Centre (SDCC).

(iii) Monitoring performance of telephone exchanges/media on daily basis.

(iv) Conversion of Single Base Module (SBM) to Remote Switching Units (RSUs).

(v) Conversion of C-DOT 256 Port exchanges into Access Network-Rural Automatic Exchanges (AN-RAXs).

(vi) Provision of Maintenances free battery sets and Engine Alternators for back -up power supplies.

(vii) Annual Maintenances Contract (AMC) entered for WLL equipments working in rural area including Fixed Wireless Telephones (FWTs) and provision of AMC in new supplies.

(viii) Provision of high capacity external maintenance free battery with FWT for providing large talk time and standby time.

(ix) Battery charger of FWTs to operate in the villages in the voltages range of 90-300V.

(x) Replacement of Multi Access Radio Relay (MARR) Village Public Telephoes (VPTs).

(e) It has been the effort of BSNL management to give best possible service to its customers. Hence the question of lack of motivation on part of BSNL management does not arise.

Panchayats without telephone connectivity

*238. SHRI SU. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Panchayats in the country without telephone connectivity; and

(b) the steps taken to provide telephone facility to all the Panchayats in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMED): (a) As on 30.9.2005, there are 8,960 Panchayats in the country where none of the villages coming under these Panchayats have telephone connectivity. This excludes panchayats lying in deep forest/naxalite infested areas etc.

(b) Following steps are being taken to provide telecom facility in all villages in the country with support from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF):

(i) Village Public Telephones (VPTs) are to be provided in all the remaining 66,822 uncovered villages excluding villages having population less than 100, lying in thick forest areas/naxalite infested areas etc. These VPTs will be provided in a time bound manner by November 2007. Out of the above, 13,078 villages have been provided VPTs till 30.9.2005.

(ii) Rural Community Phones (RCPs) are to be provided in 46,253 villages with population more than 2000 and not having a PCO. These RCPs wil be provided in a time bound manner by September 2007. 15,946 RCPs have been provided till 30.9.2005.

(iii) Rural Direct Exchange Lines (RDELs) are likely to be provided on demand in 1,685 commercially unviable Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCAs) by first quarter of the year 2006.